The future of language education in the light of Covid - Lessons learned and ways forward

Summary of initial findings from the ECML / PNF international survey of the ways in which the COVID pandemic and resulting lockdowns have affected institutions, language teachers and language learners

In part A of the summary, there is a brief, general summary in note form of the results of the survey, which was run in English and French during February 2021. The reflective comments in response to the final items of the questionnaire, which related to respondents' reflections on the lessons to be learned, and to the challenges and opportunities that arise from it are reported on in Part B.

The report is, of course, very general and does not separate sectors, countries, or professional roles, which will be done when we go more deeply into the analysis of the results. Responses in French have been translated. Percentages have been rounded.

Part A

No of respondents: 1,735

Countries: Just over 50% from two countries – Greece (30% +), Romania (23%+)

32 other European countries, plus Canada, United States, Colombia and Nepal
Italy 9% +, Spain 6%, Germany 4%+ - no other country more than 2.5%

The respondents spent on average 30 minutes each to complete the questionnaire. This is roughly equivalent to half a working year. Their contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

Role of respondents

52% foreign languages teachers, almost 10% parents (were they also teachers?), 7% higher education lecturers, 6% teachers of languages of schooling, 4% lecturers in adult education.

A large range of other roles – teachers of classics, of other languages, researchers, consultants, managers and owners of private language centres, testing experts, policy makers…

Kinds of institutions represented

Over half in secondary education - lower secondary (27%), upper secondary (25%); 18% primary, 13% higher education, 8% private language schools

Others included, adult education, cultural institutes, examining boards and a wide variety of other organisations, including teacher training institutes and ministries.

Length of experience of respondents

Over 82% had more than 10 years of professional experience, and only 3% had less than two years.

Experience during the pandemic

Reflects changing policies regarding lockdowns. For nearly 30% it has been mainly remote; for the rest it has been a mixture of remote and face-to-face teaching; in most cases where this is indicated, remote teaching has been mainly synchronous. (*Note – the question was ambiguous and should have separated mainly remote / face to face from synchronous / asynchronous)*

The open responses mainly recounted a mixture of remote and face-to-face teaching, except for a small number of teachers whose schools were closed, or, in one case, who lost their job.

Time available to work with learners

Almost half (47%) of respondents considered they had less time to work with learners than in normal times. 12.9% considered they had more time, and the rest thought that things hadn't changed.

Teachers made a number of observations about time management, some positive, more negative:

- My students say that they love online as it is a more one-on-one experience then when in the classroom
- time has not worked in favour since I could not individualise my teaching methods very well within distance learning
- It was a new situation for all of us and students cannot manage their presence in front of a screen for more than 3 hours per day

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- remote periods are shorter, and I have to spend more time on bureaucracy
- There has been lack of interaction between students as it happens in class which means that students have been more focused on the stimuli given, and at the same time may have a great feeling of tiredness because they are just stuck in front of their screens for so long with no interaction between their classmates and teacher which is vital.
- I also work in an asynchronous environment (e-class platform) where I have to prepare and grade tests, set assignments and exercises, give feedback to students in individual messages. Generally, I spend more time working online than before, when I used to teach face to face. I also answer to parents' emails all the time, not to mention the video conferences with my fellow colleagues at a regular basis.
- While the load of work involved on the part of teachers is by far larger, the final assimilation on the part of students is impressively shallower

These are sample comments from many teachers who experienced more time-consuming work for less effective teaching, although in the 300 + responses to the question, there are examples of successful remote teaching, with breakout rooms for group work and increased individual feedback.

Comparison of language teaching techniques, and learning tasks used by teachers during the pandemic and before (statements matching experience - more than 1 response possible)

Planning: a large number of respondents (27%) believed that planning teaching had become more difficult since the beginning of the pandemic, with only 2.5% finding planning was easier.

Amount of change: 24% felt that techniques and learning tasks had changed significantly, while 6% believed that they had not changed greatly.

Variety and motivation in teaching and learning tasks: 22.5% believed that these had become more varied and motivating due to the constraints, as compared to 8.5% who believed the opposite.

Effectiveness in developing learning competences: only 8.5% felt that the techniques and learning tasks used by teachers during the pandemic had been as effective as they had been before the pandemic.

Receptive and productive language skills /Oral and written work

Respondents were asked how the pandemic had influenced the content of their language teaching, especially with regard to receptive and productive skills. The general content of lessons seems to have remained very constant, with a majority for "the same as before" in most areas; the activities on which there was less emphasis (presumably due to the difficulties of doing them in remote teaching) were group work, project work, individual presentations). Grammar explanations, reading comprehension, writing exercises tended to be either as usual or slightly more frequent.

The split between oral and written work was almost equally divided between those who had done more written work (35%) and those who had done more oral work (30%) and the 35% for whom the balance had not changed.

Observations about hybrid learning

In the overall responses to this 53% of respondents judged hybrid learning as being less effective than either remote learning or than socially distanced learning in the classroom; 26% judged it as being more effective and 22% thought it didn't make a difference. Some 600 of the respondents took the opportunity offered in the survey to make comments on hybrid learning. Many of the

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comments were very interesting, but it was evident that there was confusion between "hybrid" and "remote" learning, so the overall results must be interpreted with caution.

The positive opinions about hybrid learning pointed out the flexibility it provides to combine individual work online with face-to-face interaction, allowing the social contact missing in just remote teaching. Other teachers found it a challenge to combine the two modes of teaching and thought that it was an additional workload without necessarily added efficiency. Here is a sample of points raised specifically about hybrid learning:

- Students have mentioned how much they prefer the flexibility of hybrid learning. It is easier to combine it with duties as jobs, taking care of a family etc. Also, some students became a lot more active. However, other were overwhelmed by the choices they had to make - although we provided regular synchronous sessions in which teachers helped overcome tasks etc.
- Hybrid learning enables teachers to use innovative teaching methods, to engage students in the learning procedure more actively. What is more, it gives students and teachers the opportunity to discuss any possible problems of e-learning, when they are in the physical classroom
- It's more efficient to manage the class behind the cameras ... More time for the class. Very fast access to internet and files. Face-to-face learning in the classroom creates a more sincere relationship between teacher and students, and among students. Classroom lessons help to improve evaluation. Hybrid learning seemed the most effective to me since it combined the remote learning and asynchronous method with the students where there has been an effort to keep the teaching and learning material at the possible level, as well as some face-to-face sessions which familiarise both students together and me and could have some real hands-on experiences and in depth analysis of any problematic areas concerning learning and behavioural problems
- They are two totally different things which in combination have not promoted language learning in any way. In my opinion face to face teaching cannot be substituted by remote language learning. Only students' digital skills have been promoted to some extent.
- The difficulty is to switch from the one way to the other.
- It is sometimes wrongly defined " blended" learning although hybrid means using face to face and remote learning at the same time. I have not had extensive experience in that regard but tend to think that planning and delivering effective lessons in a hybrid learning environment is challenging as materials and activities should be adapted to two different types of delivery. This might really affect the learning process and increase preparation time on the teacher.

Many of the other comments are about remote learning, and concern difficulties of concentration for learners and the need for adaptability by the teachers; a more detailed study of the points raised here will be useful for the think tanks.

Experience of teaching with social distancing in classrooms: balance of focus on receptive and productive language skills

A majority (54%) considered that the balance had been about the same as in 'normal' classrooms, but 31% felt there was more attention paid to receptive skills in socially distanced classrooms, while 15% thought there was more emphasis on productive skills.

Equipment, software and logistics for remote learning: experience in the institution where you work.

The largest proportion of respondents, nearly 41%, felt that suitable equipment had been available for teachers for effective remote learning / teaching from the onset of school closure, while 31% said that, although this was not the case initially, equipment had been procured since the beginning of the pandemic. However, the number of people who considered that effective remote learning had been hindered by a lack of suitable equipment and software was only slightly smaller (over 28%).

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Teaching and learning materials: practice of the teachers where you work

The numbers of people who considered that teachers were using materials specifically developed for remote learning was 13%, similar to the number who thought teachers used mainly existing teaching materials. A slightly smaller number (12%) believed teachers used mainly teaching/learning resources derived from online sources. However, a large majority – over 61% - said that teachers were using a combination of all three of these types of resources.

How has the Covid pandemic affected your practice or that of your institution in relation to assessment in the classroom?

Experience relating to examinations, tests, and continuous assessment

A majority of respondents (58%) said that the mix of continuous assessment and graded tests and examinations had been different from the one used before the pandemic. 28.5% felt that (some?) exams and graded tests had been replaced by continuous assessment, while only a minority (13%) said that the mix had remained more or less the same as before the pandemic.

The effect of the pandemic on examinations (more than one answer possible)

A majority of respondents – over 60% - believed that the lack of supervision during tests and of invigilation during exams had reduced their reliability. However, 19% believed that continuous assessment had permitted fair and accurate evaluation of learners' performance, and a slightly larger number (19.5%) thought that continuous assessment had reduced the stress on learners.

The effect of exam cancellations, where relevant, on the motivation of learners

A majority – over 59% - believed such cancellations had had a negative effect on learner motivation, while nearly 17% thought they had had a positive effect. Nearly 24% felt such cancellations had made no difference to learner motivation.

Feedback and assessment for learning in remote learning situations

Nearly half of the respondents (49%) believed that the lack of face-to-face contact had reduced the possibility of giving immediate feedback to learners, but 28% said that remote learning had enabled them to give more individualised advice and feedback to learners and to better identify individual difficulties. Nearly 23% did not agree with either of these positions and presumably felt that remote teaching and learning had not made a difference to the amount and quality of feedback and assessment for learning.

Feedback and assessment for learning in the case of classroom learning and teaching with social distancing.

Two statements were offered, and a similar number of respondents opted for each of them: nearly 50.5% felt that, because there had been fewer opportunities for interaction with the class, this has reduced the amount of immediate feedback given. 50.5% believed that, as both learners and teachers were wearing masks, this had hindered the teacher's ability to identify learning problems and give feedback.

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Sample Additional comments about assessment during the pandemic

Among the wide range of comments from around 490 respondents there was a mix of negative and positive points of view. Many respondents believed that proper assessment and evaluation was rendered difficult if not impossible during remote learning:

- "Technical problems on the part of the students as well as the teachers' inability to know whether the students were being helped during the assessment tests/exams, made their assessment difficult as well as partly unreliable."
- "The best assessment is done in face-to-face learning. Online assessments are OK using Google forms with specified timing, but the teacher never knows who is really taking the test. (As a parent, I also took tests for my daughter, because her class teacher gave her too much work…!).
- "Feedback has become very important for students who could otherwise experience a big void in connecting with the world of …. Still most teachers have neglected assessment as they are suspicious and unsure about validating the consistency and veracity of their students' learning."
- "When teaching in a classroom situation, it has been extremely difficult for both the teacher and students …. The mask impedes clarity, and frequently both the teacher and student are misunderstood. Moreover, whilst tests or exams are still possible, most of us are a bit wary of getting too close to students …. So, in the classroom scenario there is less assessment than previously, whilst online one cannot notice certain errors such as spelling mistakes or badly constructed sentences, as it is impossible to look at the work of an entire class, whereas in the past, moving around the class the teacher had a pretty good idea of learner difficulties."

However, some responses were more positive.

- "Tools such as Google Docs have enhanced my ability to retrieve, rework, and focus on learner output. This is turn has improved the quality of my feedback and is certainly something I will keep in my teaching toolkit. It has helped me to prioritise learner language over coursebooks. However, I have been fortunate in having time and resources to develop my teaching in this regard."
- "Continuous assessment has made it easier for teachers to get regular feedback on students' development and difficulties. These small tests were the foundation for individual feedback and helped interpret results of the final exam."
- "In my opinion, continuous assessment takes a back seat during the pandemic. My goal is to motivate learners and make them more autonomous, which is why I often use self-correction activities."

Steps taken to help learners return to face-to-face learning after periods of remote learning

Bearing in mind that some respondents selected more than one of the measures mentioned, the weighting of responses was as follows:

- learners had been given information and advice on approaches to learning and classwork with social distancing: about 38%
- "Catch-up" programmes were organised for learners who had fallen behind or dropped out: 30%.
- individualised reviews of learning achievement during the period of remote learning had taken place: just over 25%.
- Other measures: 6%.

Most of the various comments offered by 80 or so respondents either mentioned that no return to face-to-face teaching had been possible or that their institution had taken no meaningful steps. However, the following examples of additional support were given:

- "Grammar and vocabulary revisions for a week in the physical classroom (face-to-face)."
- "Teachers offered additional individual lessons to students."

This example of a far-sighted approach was also offered:

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- "We tried to teach our students how to prepare themselves for future online learning; we taught them what we had noticed they couldn't do during the first period of online teaching. When we went back to online teaching, our students were better prepared and online teaching became easier and more normal."

Welfare of learners during periods of remote learning

Respondents reported on a range of measures taken to promote learners' welfare during the periods of remote learning. The most frequent (38%) was by providing suggestions for recreational and group activities to attenuate the isolation of learning at home. Other measures included the organisation of helplines, support bubbles and regular news bulletins.

Over 50 of the 130 respondents who commented on this question said that their institution had taken no action relating to learner welfare. A small number of respondents mentioned the role of school psychologists.

Comments made on steps taken to mitigate the stress experienced by teachers due to school closures.

Many of the over 600 respondents said no measures had been taken by their institution. Others offered comments which ranged from insightful to angry. The following examples illustrate the range of perspectives:

- "None, on the contrary: Teachers were supposed to change immediately to video teaching without any helpful support and were asked to work a lot more e.g., administration, changing our programme to video teaching, changing examinations... Teachers were feeling lost and stressed and worked at least 40% more than normally. No compensation [was offered] for the [extra] work teachers did during the pandemic time."
- "There have been measures to find a balance for teachers in teaching synchronous remote lessons, asynchronous lessons and socially-distanced classes by taking turns. Teachers have been thoroughly trained before working with new tools like Zoom in remote lessons."
- "Teacher training provided for all new software and platforms used. Regular teachers' social video meet-ups organised for those interested. Virtual coffee room established where teachers have the option to join colleagues online for a chat before classes begin."
- "Regular meetings where teachers can talk about any issues they have been having; one-to-one meetings with teachers and the manager; a 'wellbeing' bulletin board and virtual coffee lounge set up; flexible timetable to enable teachers to teach when they are not trying to home-school their own children."
- "I am not aware of anything. We have been supportive of each other in the department, though, during our online meetings and beyond."
- "Even though it's a difficult situation I am feeling pretty well. In my opinion it is hard and tiring to find my own motivation but with the students I am always happy and do my best to motivate them. But there is no one to motivate me. Sometimes I don't know where I find the energy."
- "There is a psychologist at school that can be contacted. The school technicians have become more and more effective in solving everyday problems".
- "We managed to make our own help-groups, talking about remote teaching ideas and troubleshooting on a regular basis, which made us feel united in a way."
- "Creation of a teachers' WhatsApp group and [having] regular small meetings of teachers through Zoom to talk about our ongoing classes, to share new experiences, and ask for peer advice."

The general impact of the pandemic on teachers' continuing professional development.

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Perhaps surprisingly, a majority of respondents to this question (58%) stated that professional development activities and opportunities had continued as they were before the pandemic started, while the other 42% said they had been cancelled or drastically reduced because of the pandemic.

Experience of professional development during the period of the pandemic and remote learning

Respondents were offered four options and were able to choose more than one of them, which many of them did. The weighting of the over 2,500 responses below implied a spread of experience among respondents but indicated that almost three-quarter of them had benefited from relevant professional development during the periods of remote learning.

- The option selected most frequently (30% of total selections) was that institution and/or the education authority had provided training in using the equipment and software required in remote teaching.
- The provision of training and professional development that focused on the adaptation of programmes to remote learning and teaching and on the necessary methods and competences attracted over a quarter of the total selections, while the option indicating that the institution had organised meetings to reflect on experience of remote learning and to adapt programmes and methods to take account of feedback was selected was somewhat less frequently (just over 20% of all selections).
- However, the option indicating that teachers had been left to organise their own teaching activities without, or with hardly any, professional training or development attracted over 26% of all selections (it can be assumed that most respondents choosing this option did not also select others in the list).

Experience of professional development during periods of classroom teaching with social distancing.

In this parallel question respondents were offered five options and were able to choose more than one of them, which again many of them did. The weighting of the over 2,200 responses below also illustrated the range of experience among respondents.

- Rather surprisingly, the situation in which teachers were left to organise their own teaching activities without or with hardly any professional training or development in approaches to teaching in socially distanced classroom comprised nearly one third of all selections made.
- The availability of training in procedures for maintaining social distancing in the classroom was an option that attracted 22% of all selections. However, the provision of training and professional development on adapting language teaching programmes and methods for socially distanced classrooms attracted only half that proportion of all selections.
- On the other hand, organisation of meetings to reflect on experiences of socially distanced teaching attracted nearly 18% of all responses, and the statement that programmes and methods had been adapted in the light of feedback from colleagues and learners comprised over 16% of the total selections made.

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Have there been changes in organisation of teaching institutions during the pandemic?

40% of respondents stated that working conditions had changed, and almost 10% said that the number of teachers employed had changed, too. 20% of the respondents noticed differences in the supervision of the quality of teaching offered, and the same number saw changes in the availability of professional counselling.

Here are some of the comments on these issues:

- Language teachers have been asked to work more hours than other teachers, the burden was insufferable, due to the fact that language teachers teach in more than one class at a school
- There has been absolutely no guidance from English language teachers' supervisors.
- We haven't done any class observations, which we used to do in each term before) but possible problems have been discussed at department meeting
- The working context has changed; however, the replacement of the physical classroom with synchronous remote lessons has worked well. The number of teachers has not been affected, because even if some students dropped out during the pandemic, others sometimes from more remote areas in the country have been able to join newly established remote lessons. Quality assessment of the classes is still well possible through remote class visits.
- The pandemic forced a lot of people out of work, who now work as language teachers online. The influx of teachers with very little experience has impacted working conditions and quality of teaching.

Nevertheless, the majority of comments indicated that there had been no changes.

Assessment of the amount of time allotted to working remotely with learners synchronously and/or asynchronously.

Only a minority of respondents (15%) felt that that the time available had been sufficient and productive for the whole class, with nearly 18% believing that it had been insufficient and unproductive. Meanwhile, just over half of respondents thought that the time available had been sufficient and productive for some learners but not others, and 15% had found there was not enough time to handle individual learning difficulties effectively. A few respondents added comments offering a little more explanation, as illustrated below.

- "The amount of time was sufficient, but not productive for everyone; it very much depended on the learners' attitude; learners can always blame technology if they do not participate."
- "Sufficient for diligent students and students that have digital competences, very insufficient for students with learning difficulties".
- "Insufficient for the suggested model – I implemented my own structure [with] extra contact by appointment / tutorial / catch-up sessions".

Learner achievement and progress during the during the pandemic

A majority of respondents consider that learner achievement and progress has been reduced during the pandemic – 20% of them thought that there had been considerable loss of progress, and just over 40% that there had been some loss. 26% though it had been more or less the same amount of progress, and some 12% were of the view that it been different, with more progress in some areas and less in others. Here are some comments:

- Individual approach has helped learners to improve their skills. Some learners are more concentrated than in class.
- Learning of traditional subjects (grammar and vocabulary) was more regular. On the other hand, all oral expression activities really suffered from the lack of interaction. Students have had more opportunities

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to train and be assessed in non-productive skills which, as a consequence, have been more effectively mastered.

- depending on a type of learners, learners with learning and cognitive disabilities and were more challenged and were not able to progress at the same pace in all four skills
- with teenage and adult students, it was more or less the same, but significantly reduced with young learners
- reduced spontaneous reproduction and in practicing the language in the form of role play or in group work
- Interactions in pair or in groups were easier remotely and more pleasant than in-presence (no longer required masks and social distancing)

Assessment of aspects of language education during the pandemic.

This item provided positive statements about language education during the pandemic. The responses tended to provide a balance between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the statements, with a good proportion selecting "no opinion".

The areas where there were more positives than negatives were:

- We have been able to maintain the quality & variety of learners'/ students' language learning experiences, and their achievement.
- Our learners/students have engaged successfully with remote and socially distanced learning.
- Plurilingual and pluricultural approaches have continued to be used and teaching programmes have taken account of linguistic diversity.
- Teaching approaches have taken successful account of learner diversity
- Learners have been provided with adequate support in the use of technology.
- Individual advice and counselling have been provided for learners.
- Parents have received support and advice about their role in helping.
- The importance of language education in the overall curriculum has been maintained during the pandemic.
- The importance of language education in the overall curriculum has been maintained during the pandemic.

The areas where there have been more negatives than positives were:

- Learners' interest and motivation has been maintained over the different periods of the pandemic
- It has been possible to carry out reliable and valid assessment of learners' work.
- Learners from disadvantaged environments have been well integrated.

The highest proportion of disagreement was the 59% concerning the integration of disadvantaged learners and the over 40% who had concerns about adequate assessment.

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Part B – selected responses in open text to questions about lessons learned, positive aspects of the experience and challenges

These questions were at the end of the survey, and a varying minority of all respondents answered them. There was a degree of overlap between the three questions, so an attempt has been made to broadly categorize the selected responses to them according to a set of focus points that seemed to be relevant following our first read-through and our comparison of the hundreds submitted. These categories are shown in table 1 below.

Depending on the case, some of the responses selected have been translated from other languages, mainly French, and others have been slightly edited for the sake of clarity. In several cases, different parts of longer comments covering several issues have been divided up and categorised separately. In all three cases, the total number of responses include up to 1% that were null: people started to write and just left a word or one character or a dismissive remark.

It is important to emphasise that this report contains an initial unsystematic selection of contributions from respondents. Additional more systematic text analysis work will be undertaken in order to identify and prioritise the key issues raised and the opinions expressed.

TEACHING & LEARNING	TEACHERS	LEARNERS	ORGANISATIONS	TECHNOLOGY
Methods	Awareness, skills, digital literacy etc.		Strategy, logistics	Availability & access at home
Assessment	Motivation		Consistency	Adequacy
Use of resources & activities	Social contact & wellbeing		Support for teachers	Constraints
Use of technology & apps etc.	Workload & conditions	Autonomy	Support for learners	Apps and other tools
Flexibility of access	Needs of individuals with less training, experience, confidence etc.	Needs of individuals e.g.: the socially & otherwise disadvantaged	Economic issues	Cameras
Autonomous learning			Health & safety	
Attention to individual needs			Quality assurance	
Efficacy, use of time		Role of parents		

Table 1: a preliminary overview of the main focus points in the open text comments in response to the three questions in this report.

A. The most important lessons learned from language education experience during the pandemic.

617 of the 1,735 who completed the survey (nearly 36%) responded to this invitation. As with the final open questions (52 and 53 below), the range of topics and issues covered was broad.

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Unsurprisingly, responses ranged from the positive, even excited, to the negative, even desperate, and from the detailed, covering various issues, to the cryptic. First impressions are that positive and enlightening lessons learned are fairly evenly balanced - and occasionally mixed in - with lessons learned or perceptions about the limitations or unsuitability of remote learning.

Lessons learnt about language teaching and learning during the pandemic:

- "In future I would like to continue with the hybrid learning. I think that combining school learning and remote learning offer advantages which could be useful after the pandemic."

- "Despite some difficulty in interacting with students (reduced visibility), since the Internet was at our fingertips more than ever, the wide range of materials available has made teaching more varied and enticing."

- "Face-to-face interaction and real-classroom group dynamics cannot be substituted by any alternative form of distance teaching / learning. When distance learning is "imposed", regardless of the underlying reasons, the educational process becomes stressful, frustrating and impersonal for the learner as well as the teacher."

- "I've learned that 1) Teachers and learners can adapt to any environment when in need. 2) Technology is an integral part of our daily lives and of education as well. 3) When we learn to use the new methods of e-teaching, we have a great tool in our hands. Teaching can be motivating, interesting, pleasant, free of stress."

- "Classroom management is much easier to handle when teaching online. Most of my students feel relaxed and resilient, and I personally find distance learning more effective than face-to-face learning with social distancing and wearing masks."

- "The advantages for me as a teacher of distance learning are as follows: better use of technology and its abilities, a variety of reading and listening tasks, grammar and vocabulary activities which I couldn't have done/used in a real class without the use of class-internet or photocopied activities, no travelling expenses or time wasted going to school and coming back home. On the other hand, writing was less privileged in that I couldn't give students in-depth feedback but general comments, students felt a bit intimidated by the use of technology to write and send their written work, sometimes they just copied texts from the Internet, speaking was less privileged too despite the fact that students were less shy to talk about any topic in both their mother tongue and in the foreign language."

- "Things that are important in classroom teaching – establishing a relationship, communicating/ discussing/ agreeing on objectives, ensuring variation, giving effective feedback etc. are just as important or even more important in remote or hybrid teaching. Technology opens up new opportunities but must not be overused."

- "Depending on the size of the group, it is difficult to encourage students to speak spontaneously and engage in discussion. We must therefore give them time and space so that they gain confidence without obliging them [to participate]/. It's a question of finding a balance."

- "Face to face learning can in no way be substituted by remote learning. Teaching is not just a procedure for giving knowledge or marking tests. It's interaction! You need to 'touch' each student individually and try to help, give and take from him/her. It's too faceless to talk to a machine and not see the faces and body language of your students!!"

- "If asked, I would only be happy to go back to our face-to-face learning if there are no masks, [and if] students can do fun speaking activities in pairs and groups without social distancing, and with no stress about wiping off all the germs in our classrooms each lesson."

Lessons learnt about being a teacher during the pandemic:

- "Training and professional support must be provided to help teachers get over difficulties. Psychological support must be provided to both students and teachers."

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- "It is important to keep a work-life balance and not let the work take up your whole day, being available 24/7…We had to organise and manage everything alone, which takes an extreme amount of time, so the lesson learned is to keep time for our lives after work, because otherwise you end up struggling and not surviving this awful situation."

- "The most important lesson I've learnt is being adaptable to change and new conditions. Improvisation and 'opening up' to the new situation and the new perspectives are two more things I've learnt, as well as sticking together and supporting each other through both the good and the bad times. Sympathy and patience should also be added to my Covid-19 "treasure chest".

- "Now that the teachers have already got the hang of online teaching tools and more and more platforms are becoming available, I've learnt to enjoy online-teaching despite all the difficulties and constraints.... Even though there's now less time spent on travelling to work, our work-life balance has never been as significant as these days. Working long hours in front of the screen has had a rather negative impact on our health, especially on those teachers who live and work abroad….."

- "The teachers who didn´t want to teach online because they said they didn´t know how to have learned how to and are happy that they have done so, though it was and is hard for them. Use challenging times to move forward and learn to adapt - don´t let them paralyze you."

- "Never back down. I have learned to adapt, I have discovered a great number of resources for online teaching that I wouldn't have used if we hadn't been in lockdown. I have started to take part in social media groups of language teachers that give help, advice and exchange materials."

- "The most important lesson that I have learned is that teachers, no matter their previous teaching experience, need to be constantly interested in developing their teaching skills and to be actively involved in their own professional development. They also need to permanently adapt to their learners' needs and find ways to stimulate them".

- "We have learned how to use technology in the varied panorama that we are experiencing. The whole scenario may change dramatically at any moment. Now we are ready for whatever is coming."

- "Patience, flexibility and motivation".

Lessons learnt about learners during the pandemic.

- "Distance learning is too difficult for students with learning difficulties."

- "There are students who know how to manage their time and organize themselves, and there are others who cannot. Often those who were weak before the pandemic succeed in motivating themselves even less during distance education and do not accept offers of support, while others appreciate the increase in freedom, which offers them tasks to be done individually."

- "In my country, cameras were supposed to be turned off by learners throughout distant synchronous learning. This was extremely unhelpful and resulted in some learners completely distancing themselves from the schooling procedure and becoming lax and ineffective in dealing with homework as well as classwork. Further, parents could not cope with both home schooling and working from home so their children could often completely disengage from the lessons and that did not help anybody. Students with learning difficulties had a really bad time of it because their attention span just went completely awry. School is the children's society and they have seriously missed it these past 12 months."

- "My experience has strengthened my belief in the necessity to promote learner autonomy and to focus on language learning strategies. It has become very obvious that good language learners can more easily cope with remote and hybrid learning, and autonomous learners understand that the tasks help them to develop their competences."

- "The pandemic has highlighted the difficulties in social and educational backgrounds for the less privileged. Programmes for the integration of students from different backgrounds (refugees, immigrants) have come to a stop. Education has become largely out of reach for those with

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financial difficulties, who receive practically no help at all, apart from the efforts of teachers, who have been left to their own devices to do their best and are at the receiving end of society's censure."

- "Students have developed autonomy: they are more Independent and self-sufficient in learning, but at the same time they have lost a bit of motivation and the feeling of being in learning environment."

- "Since we work with minors, attention and interest must be constantly motivated and stimulated in an indirect, sometimes playful and lively way. In this context, teaching online does not in any way guarantee the effectiveness of educational practice, even if some new initiatives have arisen. In my opinion, children from underprivileged backgrounds were automatically excluded from education."

- "Remote lessons were important to keep in touch and to feel less frightened. Technology has been very important to avoid complete isolation but not enough to reach the goal of learning a language in a group class."

Lessons learnt during the pandemic about Issues to do with organisations (schools, colleges, universities, the state etc.)

- "Never trust the state to help teachers or students cope with difficulties in teaching or learning!"

- "I run a private language school. Our internal learners are mostly adults. We have maintained our high standards with all internal learners: adults, teens and young learners. We also teach in state schools. The support given to individual learners, whole groups and parents has been exceedingly poor. I have noticed that some teachers have channelled their stress into bullying the learners and threatening them with poor marks."

- "There has been zero investment in training students how to learn remotely, and superficial training for teachers about how to convert their existing materials/exams for online use. No effort was made, institutionally, to understand or communicate the different pedagogical requirements of online learning. I cannot create a good learning environment on my own: it requires an institutional effort."

- "That the department I work for was unprepared for remote learning, that the person in charge refused to take responsibility for just about any decision which had to be made. I cannot say I have learned any lesson apart from the one I have always known: I am on my own out there, trying to make something work which I have had no training in. The odd help came from an individual colleague, but not from the institution itself."

- "At our institution, we have had lots of offers of professional development, which I believe most people did not take up as there were so many offers that it was easy to lose track. They also came from an external office that we do not have any personal connections with, which made it easier to ignore. Internally, we are only now, one year into the pandemic, organising a workshop on remote teaching."

- "It is very important that the same quality management is applied to remote classes as to those at school. There need to be class visits by administrators, and the teacher's need to get regular feedback. The same of course applies to teacher-learner interactions."

Lessons learnt during the pandemic to do with technology (internet connections, equipment, cameras, learning platforms etc.)

- "The younger students (12-13 years) worked more efficiently than the older ones (14-17 years). The younger ones did their homework and were active in the lessons. Very few of the older ones did the homework or were active during the lessons. This may be the case because here the students were not obliged to switch on their cameras. This is humiliating for the teacher, as he or she actually relies only on the willingness of students to take part in the lessons. Switching on cameras should be an obligation."

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- "The constant distraction brought about by technology has had a negative impact on young teens, and their parents have only been able to intervene in part because they are at work and because a lot of school activities have to be carried out through the use of devices. We have to get back to a healthy balance between tech and non tech."

- "I have learned that students are more diligent in handing in their assignments on time when I create an online assignment on Google Classroom. It may happen because they are continuously reminded by their mobile phones."

- "Some people can't use a computer. They still don't know how to use it. There are too many different applications they need to learn how to use in a very short time. Using WhatsApp is faster but not all students have a mobile phone, and not all of them have internet access on their mobiles."

- "Tools to create an interactive learning environment also shift to digital tools; luckily, there are large resources that can be activated. It also proved to be very important to use a learning platform in parallel with a video conferencing tool. A platform such as Moodle can be used to upload materials before the lessons, during the lessons, and to assign homework. It also incorporates a news forum in which teacher and learners can communicate efficiently."

B.   What in your view are the most important positive aspects of language education in the pandemic that could continue to impact on language education when the pandemic is over?

594 respondents (about 34% of the total) offered answers to this question, although several said that no positives came to mind, and other responses were null. Otherwise, as with the question about lessons learned (49) discussed above, a wide range of topics were addressed, and attitudes ranged from rather negative (not exemplified below) to very positive. Some of the same points made in response to question 49 were repeated or amplified here. The following sample responses are organised using the category headings in the table on page 1.

Positive aspects of language teaching and learning that could continue to have an impact when the pandemic is over.

- "In my view, the only positive to come out of language learning remotely would be that some learners become more autonomous in their approach to their studies. However, I do not believe that remote learning can ever replace the dynamics of a real classroom with a lively interactive atmosphere. Relationships are built in the classroom and not on a screen: body language, smiles of encouragement, teachers' ability to pick up on the dynamics between students, etc are all lost in the remote learning environment."

- "Hybrid education when either the students or the teacher is not able to attend physically, remote guests, remote teachers, the ability to participate regardless of time or place. Being able to access language education even in rarer languages, as we now have the technology and are able to use it. There are a lot of possibilities and I feel that this is a very positive thing, even if it's hard on the teachers."

- "Online teaching and learning during the pandemic has shown us that things that we thought were not possible for us to do were actually possible. We also saw that completely online [courses] do not fulfil learners' needs, but a hybrid model could be very useful for learning and for a more effective use of physical facilities, especially in terms of environmental concerns, and for a better work-life balance for teachers."

- "The most important positive effects: remote classes have led to the exploration of many online tools and resources for teaching that will benefit variety in teaching after the pandemic is over; remote classes have made access to language study more widely available, especially in remote

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areas with no access to a school; since remote lessons will continue after the pandemic, it will often be cost saving and more environmentally friendly than face-to-face classes."

- "Education is still based on a model formed in the 19th century - it is about time we joined the 21st century and adopted an approach more in keeping with the digital age and all the benefits and opportunities they afford going forward."

- "More autonomy for students, and hopefully, for teachers as well. More flexibility in using teaching/learning resources (saying goodbye to paper-based, heavily 'grammaticalized' coursebooks, perhaps)."

- "The use of engaging, relevant and learner-centred tasks to motivate learners. The awareness of different learning styles and how a varied approach to teaching and assessment methods needs to be adapted to support all learners."

Positive aspects from the point of teachers that could continue to have an impact when the pandemic is over.

- "The teachers have discovered several digital resources which have enabled them to diversify their approaches."

- "Distance education has allowed us to find multiple opportunities for collaboration in teaching with colleagues from other universities, and I hope that we can start to develop this. The situation has also made it possible to attend seminars abroad and even "invite" big names to make presentations at our seminars."

- "Speaking from personal experience, after over 30 years of teaching face-to-face, the transfer to online teaching has forced me to re-evaluate a lot of what I do in class and provided an opportunity for creativity which has been beneficial to me and, I hope, to learners. I have developed a new set of skills and finally taken on board the enormous potential of the internet as a resource. This is also true for the majority of my colleagues."

- "The considerable progress made by teachers in taking on board digital technology and videoconferencing. We have been very creative in general. Progress in the educational relationship: we are much closer to our students and aware of their difficulties. We are more united between colleagues (sharing of activities, online tests, etc.).".

- "My commute before the pandemic was 1.5 hours in one direction, and even then I was working from home two days a week, so this pandemic situation has really helped me make much better use of my time. It would be great for to see a more longstanding shift in attitudes toward remote working as it can often be just as if not more productive than working in the office (or physical classroom).".

Positive aspects concerning learners that could continue to have an impact when the pandemic is over.

- "Positive aspects are that students have not only been learning English but also improving their IT literacy, which is a skill required in the workplace. Students have become familiar with handing in assignments online and receiving feedback in the same way. this is more realistic because when they are working in the real world, computers are used to write reports, emails and letters etc."

- "It has demonstrated me that it is in our hands to find solutions to the problems we are facing as teachers - the role and attitude of teachers towards online learning have a huge effect and dramatically influence learners' attitude towards this type of learning, i.e. a positive, optimistic teacher will help students to adapt better and get more involved in the process of learning."

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- "The fact that some of our learners have become more independent and confident in their skills and started using methods which help them continue learning on their own, even beyond the online classes."
- "I think it's great that students are now much more used to online meetings as a way to receive ongoing feedback and get their questions answered."
- "…What should be underlined is the fact that [learners'] attention span has been reduced, due to the effect of screen time boredom, no matter how diverse the materials presented were."
- "I would very much hope that the positive aspects of the group dynamics of remote classrooms that we have observed (high attention levels, empathetic listening, disciplined turn taking and overall sensitivity towards other learners) will spill over into classroom teaching."
- "Less distorting behaviour, or even none, during online training, reinforcement of individual work and teamwork, responsibility and maturity. Appreciation of the teaching work by students and an increase in respect towards the community."
- "There was no positive aspect of language education ...not all the children could participate and that was the worst part of it, and the most crucial point that made the whole "teaching" [experience] unbearable and disastrous."

Positive aspects concerning organisations that could continue to have an impact when the pandemic is over.

- "Civil servants in education ministries have, I hope, realized that the traditional systems no longer work in extreme conditions. We have to find [better] solutions as quickly as possible."
- "Learning the right lessons but avoiding at all cost rushing into decisions based on budgetary outcomes (e.g, online teaching = larger groups = a need for fewer teachers = unemployment, AND/OR online teaching = larger groups = need for fewer teachers = a decrease in learning quality)."
- "Allowing instructors to decide themselves if they feel it's a good idea to be on campus or not. I'm incredibly grateful that my institution let us make that decision ourselves.".
- "There are hopes that in the post-pandemic age schools will continue to exploit remote learning where it makes sense and to use face2face time more advantageously."
- "If the pandemic has highlighted certain needs in language education, it has shown that peace and focus are really essential, and that regular work and disciplined organisation of work would be very welcome when schools settle down to face-to-face classroom teaching."

Positive aspects concerning technology that could continue to have an impact when the pandemic is over.

- "Technology can save time- all kinds of consultation, feed-back sessions can be carried out online. Oral placement tests can be easily administered using online platforms. Technology opens new options when it comes to blended learning. It definitely fosters students' autonomy. Finally, it gives more flexibility to teachers; it is quite likely that in the future some courses might incorporate online synchronous tuition. One of the great advantages is accessibility of the language classes to people at different geographical locations."
- "The need for remote learning has required schools to create virtual learning environments for students. The use of breakout rooms and channels to allow students to work collaboratively on asynchronous tasks."
- "The use of technology has motivated many students, especially teenagers and young adults who are very generally comfortable with online learning. Teachers should exploit this more."

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- "Self-study programs and the discovery of online tools were really helpful. Students also trained more effectively, interacting on Teams, creating support teams in a way they had never done previously. Such habits are here to stay, hopefully."
- "Increasing familiarity with the affordances of different kinds of technology have had a positive impact on language education during the pandemic and potentially afterwards. Simply put, teachers have added more tools to their toolkit. When teachers know when and how to use these tools, they can help their students learn foreign languages more readily."
- "I used websites, apps (mentimeter, jamboard, wordwall, liveworksheets, etc) more than I thought it was possible, and I can do this as long as I have an internet connection, a laptop and a video projector in the classroom."

C. What in your view are the most important challenges to language education during the pandemic to be addressed in the future?

605 of the 1,735 respondents (also about 34%) offered answers to this question. Of its nature, the question invited comments on shortcomings or gaps that are/were of concern to respondents. Often the issues identified were mentioned briefly and without much detail. In some cases, more concrete or far-reaching points and positive suggestions were made. The sample responses below are again organised in the broad categories illustrated in the table on page 1 and illustrate the diversity of respondents' concerns.

Challenges for language teaching and learning during the pandemic to be addressed in the future.

- "Breaking through the resistance to change. Online teaching is far too valuable to be put back in the box. We have learnt so much and used it all to the benefit of students' progress: we can't just go back to face to face. The students in general much prefer face to face but a hybrid model is more efficient and effective in the long run. The curriculum has expanded to teaching digital literacy alongside the standard language syllabus.".
- "What should be taught? How can we combine critical thinking with computer literacy? Should we change the curricula in a way that is more up to date? What is the role of the teacher and of the student?"
- "Productive skills may be hindered since nothing can replace face-to-face communication. We have to make sure that students participate in the actual [use of] language and not just memorize unknown words or learn the grammar. They have to be given a fair chance to actually use the language in its everyday use as we do in [face-to-face] classes."
- "Organizing checks and examinations where cheating is not possible (but we are dreaming if we think it will happen)."
- "Reduce the number of learners per course when teaching online to ensure a minimum [length of] time for each learner to speak."

  "How to teach a hybrid lesson that is fully inclusive. How to teach pronunciation with students wearing masks. How to create effective group work tasks when students are socially distanced in the classroom."
- "I see more opportunities to evolve and fewer challenges to overcome. Language education provides ways for learners to express themselves and create. Creativity is a powerful tool for learners to cope with stress and the negative effects of the pandemic. When language education embraces creativity and focuses more on the need of the learner to use what he/she already knows but also to find new ways to function, it will find a new role in the new post-pandemic educational reality."

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Challenges concerning teachers during the pandemic to be addressed in the future.

- "Teachers' stress, the amount of work - there is no time for private life: parents and students think we have to be always available."
- "Many foreign language instructors working with adults experience precarious working conditions (e.g. temporary contracts, poor remuneration, no right to holiday or sick pay). Their work situation was already uncertain prior to the pandemic, and the pandemic has only exacerbated the issues. We need to work together proactively to improve their situation."
- "Teacher training: online training should be a part for all teacher education."
- "Ensuring there is training and supervision of teachers, to maintain a team spirit; ensure there is recognition for the efforts made, and the ergonomics and the psychological well-being of teachers…"
- "Computer literacy in combination with a more creative curriculum and better working conditions for language educators at schools."
- "Students and teachers' [work] ethic has to be attended to very seriously in normal post-pandemic conditions, so that society is ready to meet new challenges without flinching and looking for excuses if a new disaster strikes."

Challenges concerning learners during the pandemic to be addressed in the future.

- "Inclusion; learners with learning difficulties; disengaged learners; anger and depression issues; missing out on socialising; learning to handle strong feelings towards others without going overboard; learning social skills."
- "How to create a learning environment that helps learners (and teachers) to cope even better with loneliness and stress, since these are important issues during a lockdown. Wellbeing affects learning (and teaching) output in an important way."
- "Many students that came from different backgrounds struggled to attend classes. Special conditions within the learners' homes made it hard for them to attend classes and concentrate on the lesson (siblings being loud and noisy, not having appropriate equipment)."
- "How not to lose those learners who are disadvantaged in any way; how to maintain social learning, which is vital for language learning."
- "New technologies exclude some learners who do not have the means. We have to find solutions to include everyone. Autonomous work is effective for some learners, but for many others the presence of the teacher is necessary."
- "Most teachers and schools stick to old routines and try unsuccessfully to make them work remotely, by means of technology. Language education in [our country] needs to shift towards a more communicative, learning oriented approach - but it takes more than a pandemic to get teachers and schools to realize this."
- "We'll need to grapple with the social inequalities that were made worse by the pandemic, such as students from deprived communities losing track. There is a tremendous educational gap that is widening [and] that we will need to address as well."

Challenges concerning organisations during the pandemic to be addressed in the future

- "Governments should support the effectiveness of remote learning. If governments keep saying: "OK, no worries, once we start face-to-face [teaching] we will catch up with what we missed", parents and students will not take online learning seriously. They should know that It is not less effective. I think students and parents need to be aware that this is now part of learning and teaching."

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- "Create a safe, inclusive environment that kids want to learn and have fun in and not get bored. Governments should give vouchers or buy tablets or PCs for kids who don't have them or allow them to go to school to use the school ones. They could offer an allowance for technological accessories and devices and create a helpline for IT support."
- "Audio-visual material should be integrated in language learning, and institutions should ensure that proper infrastructure is available for this purpose. Continuous professional training should be provided to language teachers in the use of technologies in the classroom as well as new teaching methods in general."
- "We are a study abroad school, and restrictions on students travelling have had a devastating impact on the industry. I think it will be necessary for language schools to think about what other products and services they can offer so that if something like this happens again in the future, the risk to the organisation as a whole is spread."
- "I think we also need to think how we can make a case for language education and multilingualism as intimately human conditions that are important for peoples' and groups' identities and relevant for social power and inequalities. The public awareness of rapid innovation in the sciences and digital fields will put pressure on innovation in language education."

Challenges concerning technology during the pandemic to be addressed in the future.

- "Develop measures and means so that no-one is left behind, especially migrants, refugees, prison inmates, poor families without the economic and social conditions to access educational opportunities they are entitled to. These are probably those who most need to grab these opportunities and value them."
- "Lack of suitable devices, lack of good internet connections, lots of problems with the platforms used."
- "providing solutions to the lack of technological resources, making everyone feel part of the learning / teaching process."
- "Equal access to technology and equipment for both students and teachers."
- Long before the pandemic, I had come across a website …. where writing tasks were automatically corrected and even graded (for example C2, C1 etc....). The development of such an online tool for all languages and available to all at no cost would greatly help both teachers and students.
- "I am concerned that language education will continue to lose funding and will be perceived as less relevant if we cannot make aspects such as language in artificial intelligence, computational linguistics, and language and machine learning relevant in language education. I am afraid that if we do not think about how digital translation technologies tie in with our work, we will lose track and be regarded an outdated, rusty discipline."
- "New technologies are not the solution to everything and should not replace contact between teacher and learners and between learners themselves."

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